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AMERICAN RUSSIAN CULTURAL
ASSOCIATION, Inc.

Annual Report — 1943

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THE fall and winter season of 1943 completes the first full year of activity of the American Russian Cultural Association, Inc. For, though the first idea was conceived in the spring of 1942, it was only after some time spent in exploratory and organizational development that American Russian Cultural Association became a corporate body capable of harnessing and directing the enthusiastic energies of its original members and directors.

The timeliness of the inception of the American Russian Cultural Association was immediately apparent in a widespread and rapid growth in individual membership, and in the springing up, during its first year, of other organizations, serving to create in this country a powerful popular surge away from prejudice and toward understanding.

It is gratifying to note that within the critical year just passed, at a moment when world events had made closer association between Russia and America imperative, an independent movement within the people to establish this association on a cultural basis preceded the formal diplomatic, economic and military actions.

It was natural that ARCA, pioneering in this movement, be born in America — traditional land of the pioneer, and that its projected span into the future reach across the sea to find a firm abutment in the Soviet Union — vast scene of the world's first large scale experiment in human brotherhood.

Formed in the realization of a pressing need of the people in America and Russia for a new understanding to light the way into a fast approaching common future, ARCA, itself strictly non-political, welcomes and cooperates during this crucial time with all organizations which work towards this goal.

Circulation of the Association's aims and purposes soon brought a hearty response from active individual leaders in various cultural fields in America, and, as the mutual work and planning gathered

momentum, there was induced, in groups and among individuals, a new or revivified spirit of cooperation, which ARCA's founders believe to be the necessary foundation for any surviving society and which is now, in fact, broadly replacing competition. Within a few weeks an Advisory Board was formed, consisting of:

PROF. NICHOLAS ROERICH,
Honorary President

MRS. SAMUEL L. M. BARLOW

NORMAN BEL GEDDES

ERSKINE CALDWELL

CHARLES CHAPLIN

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

PROF. ROMAN JACOBSON

ROCKWELL KENT

DR. SERGE KOUSSEVITZKY

MRS. JOHN HENRY HAMMOND

MARIA KURENKO

DR. G. H. PAELIAN

GREGOR PIATIGORSKY

PROF. PAUL RADOSAVLJEVICH

ROBERT L. REDFIELD

QUENTIN REYNOLDS

DR. EDWIN O. SMITH

DEEMS TAYLOR

VALERY J. TERESHTENKO

DUDLEY CRAFTS WATSON

In accepting the Honorary Presidency, Professor Nicholas Roerich suggested using widely the initials of the Association, ARCA, which constitute a Russian word meaning "arc". Thus, the name itself is a symbol of light and power, associated with the electric spark and the welding torch; of faith and beauty, associated with the rainbow; of achievement and brotherhood, associated with the arch and the bridge.

In informal discussions, correspondence and meetings which took place during the formative period, plans began to evolve for a great variety of projects, some of which marked successful achievements early in ARCA's career.

The special Christmas-New Year's issue of "Novosselye", under the auspices of the Association in cooperation with its editor, Mrs. Sophie Pregel, a member of ARCA's Board of Directors, was one of the most significant of those projects. The idea was an ambitious one — to present between the covers of one issue of the Russian Literary Monthly a symposium on American cultural life from the pens of leading Americans in the fields of literature, poetry, current history and economics, art, music and science. It was felt that, while some aspects of Russian culture are not new to America, or offer no difficulty of presentation, modern Russia has not had adequate opportunity to realize the true scope of American culture.

Because the idea was so ambitious there was the more gratification upon its very full realization. It was an immediate step directly towards the primary aim of the American Russian Cultural Association — a mutual enlightenment and cultural exchange between the peoples of Russia and America. Since ARCA is an American organization, it was appropriate that the first gesture in the reciprocal action originated here. Steps have been taken to provide a sequel in the way of a Russian cultural symposium for American readers to be published here in 1944.

Of the one hundred twenty-five distinguished Americans approached, only a few failed to respond cordially and enthusiastically. Many, of course, were unable to send material upon such short notice, but almost all were heartily in accord with the aims of ARCA and quite a number expressed a desire to cooperate and contribute material for subsequent undertakings.

A study of the list of contributors to the ARCA-sponsored issue of "Novosselye" will furnish an idea of the comprehensive scope of the material presented. The following are, we feel, rather well representative of American cultural life:

PROF. CHARLES A. BEARD
HELEN CLAPSAETTLE
DR. ARTHUR COMPTON
DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER
PROF. RALPH A. GABRIEL
PROF. CHARLES GRAY
PROF. ROSWELL HAM
ROCKWELL KENT
ALFRED KREYMBORG

EDGAR LEE MASTERS
RUTH MCKENNEY
H. L. MENKEN
PROF. H. OVERSTREET
MARJORIE KINNAN RAWLINGS
UPTON SINCLAIR
LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI
PROF. DOUGLAS WILD

Near the end of November a letter was received from Dr. Dudley Crafts Watson, member of the Honorary Board of the American Russian Cultural Association, offering to give a lecture on "Russia's Art Contribution to America". His offer was accepted with appreciation, and preparations were started for his lecture, which was given on January 9, 1943, at Carnegie Chamber Music Hall. It was well attended by a receptive audience.

On March 28th, 1943, at the home of Mrs. Samuel L. M. Barlow, member of the Honorary Board, the Directors of the Association presented an interesting lecture and musical program at an informal gathering of members and friends. The meeting was

opened by Dudley Fosdick, President, who, after greeting the guests, paid a tribute to Maxim Gorki, upon whose anniversary date the meeting occurred.

J. J. Weed, Chairman for the occasion, reviewed the purposes and development of the American Russian Cultural Association and introduced the participants and features in the program which followed.

Marc Slonim delivered the main address, an illuminating lecture on "The Culture of Russia", which was warmly received by those present.

Following the lecture, Alfred Kreymborg read several of his poems, which were greatly appreciated, including "To the Soviet Union", his contribution to the ARCA issue of "Novosselye".

Efim Vitis sang a group of the latest Soviet songs, with piano accompaniment by J. Eisenberg, which were so much enjoyed that several encores were necessary.

An interesting opportunity for service was presented to ARCA when in April 1943 a request was received from one of the Public Schools for help in organizing meetings for the discussion of Russian culture for the benefit of students. The first meeting was held April 6, 1943, in the ARCA quarters, at which time Sina Fosdick, member of the Board, held a two-hour session for a large number of pupils. On June 16th, Mr. and Mrs. Fosdick made a visit to this school and talked to the students on art, museums and sport activities in Soviet Russia. After both occasions individual letters were received from all the pupils expressing gratitude and continuing interest. Subsequently, these letters found their way directly to the Soviet Union.

At about the same time, upon request of the Defense Director of a large High School in Brooklyn, ARCA arranged for them an exhibition "Russia in War Time and in Peace Time". The material used in the exhibit consisted of action photographs, stills from well-known films, photographs taken on the Russian front, photographs of sport activities during peace time, and a set of cartoons. After a run of several weeks at the High School, the exhibit was sent to one of the Brooklyn Public Schools. The exhibition material is being augmented from time to time as ARCA collects additional items and incorporates them in the exhibits.

On October 8th, ARCA sent to the 115th Street Harlem Branch of the Public Library exhibition material consisting of photo-

graphs: "Coal for Moscow", "Russians in War and Peace", several "Tass Windows", posters and photo panels. This material remained there on view for three weeks.

An exhibition, consisting of "Tass Windows", photo panels and a series of photographs depicting "Russia at War", and "The Siege of Leningrad", was sent to the Hartley House on October 15th, where the exhibition remained until October 28th. On the opening night of the exhibition, October 15th, Mrs. Olga Lang gave a talk on "Soviet Youth", which was followed by an open forum. It was well attended and appreciated by the audience.

On October 28th, Mr. Walter Grueninger of The American Red Cross at Camp Shanks, N. Y., took the material, which had been returned by the Hartley House, to Camp Shanks Hospital, where approximately seven hundred hospitalized soldiers saw the exhibition. Moreover, within the following month, several Soviet films were shown to the camp and, during that time, the exhibition was hung in the hall where the films were shown, so that the entire camp could view it. The camp has approximately 60,000 to 65,000 soldiers, and comments on the exhibition were numerous and appreciative.

On November 21st, the American Russian Cultural Association presented an illustrated lecture by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana on "The Theatre in Russia in War and Peace". Preceding the lecture, there was a brief introductory talk by Mr. Joseph Weed, member of the Board. The audience attending the lecture completely filled the ARCA Hall. Professor Dana showed over one hundred slides depicting the history of the Soviet Theatre and notable stage productions in Russia during the last twenty-five years. The response of the audience was highly enthusiastic and many favorable comments were received. Professor Dana kindly agreed to waive his fee on this occasion, and the net proceeds from the lecture were contributed to the aid of the children of Stalingrad, through the Ambijan Committee, which is in charge of Aid to Russian War Orphans.

The occasion of the Dana Lecture on November 21st also marked the opening by the American Russian Cultural Association of an exhibit in its own quarters of splendid material received from VOKS — Moscow, consisting of photographs of ancient sites and historic monuments of Pskov, Novgorod, Kalinin, Kaluga; great monasteries of Russia, such as "New Jerusalem" and the "Joseph-Volokolamsk

Monastery", the "Cathedral of the Saviour Transfigured" at Chernigov; palaces and environs of Peterhof, Tsarskoye-Selo, Pavlovsk, Leningrad; also the Museums of Tolstoi, Tschaikowsky, Chekhov and others; as well as photographs of schools, theatres and other educational buildings before the war and after their destruction. This unusual photographic material was mounted on special panels built to order for this purpose, and also hung on the walls of the ARCA Studios. The large audience which attended Professor Dana's lecture was greatly impressed by the exhibition and stayed after the lecture to view it. This exhibition at the ARCA Studios remained open to the public until January 1, 1944. Thereafter, it is to be sent on a circuit of other educational institutions in and out of New York City.

On December 2nd, an exhibition consisting of five "Tass Windows", twenty-eight photographs from the series: "Siege of Leningrad"; fifteen photographs from the series: "Coal for Moscow"; forty-seven photographs — "Leningrad during the Blockade" and one photo panel, was sent to Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, N. Y., to remain there on view for two weeks. Mr. Marc Slonim, member of the board of ARCA and lecturer on European and Russian Literature at Sarah Lawrence College, arranged this exhibition and gave a special introductory talk at the opening.

On December 12th, ARCA presented a lecture by Marc Slonim on "Soviet Russia's Literature in War". This event drew a large audience which was enthusiastic to Professor Slonim's scholarly presentation of his theme. Professor Slonim was introduced by Mr. Joseph Weed, and after the lecture answered questions from the audience. Professor Slonim graciously consented to waive his fee on this occasion, and the net proceeds from the lecture were donated by ARCA to the Ambijan Committee for relief for Russian War Orphans. A check was sent to Mr. Budich, Chairman of the Ambijan Committee, who has acknowledged the total sum of \$101.40 donated by ARCA to the aid of Stalingrad children.

To celebrate the successful conclusion of this first year, a reception and musicale was held by ARCA on December 26, 1943. A Cantata, "We'll Answer — Stalingrad" by Charles Kingsford, performed for the first time and especially arranged for vocal quartet with the composer at the piano, was beautifully interpreted, and the audience responded to it with great enthusiasm. The full score for orchestra and chorus has been photostated and is being sent to Russia.

Miss Vera Bryner, accompanied by Mr. Valentin Pavlovsky, sang two groups of songs by modern Russian composers, and Mr. Efim Vitis, accompanied by Mr. Aron Pressman, sang also two groups of songs by Soviet composers. Miss Bryner and Mr. Vitis also sang two duets, accompanied by Mr. Pressman at the piano. The excellent performance of all these compositions was greatly enjoyed by the audience, which recalled both artists several times.

Mr. Joseph Weed opened the program by introducing Hon. Eugene D. Kisselev, Consul General of the U.S.S.R., at New York City who gave a welcoming address praising the work of ARCA in helping to bring about cultural unity between the United States and Soviet Russia. The program was then taken over by Mrs. D. Fosdick, who gave brief resumes and comments on the texts of the Russian songs on the program.

An excellent review of the ARCA Reception and Musicale appeared in the New York Times on Monday, January 27th, praising especially the Cantata by Charles Kingsford and its performance. ARCA also arranged to have this Cantata performed in Carnegie Hall on January 28th at the Stalingrad Festival presented by the Ambijan Committee. Mr. Kingsford was at the piano and the vocal quartet was composed of the same artists who gave such a splendid rendition of the Cantata at its first performance at the ARCA musicale. The composition was again very well received by the audience. On the same program, the Stalingrad Festival in Carnegie Hall, there appeared two soloists from the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo who gave brilliant solo dances. The Ambijan Committee thanked ARCA for arranging also this part of the program, and acknowledged gratefully ARCA's cooperation.

During this past year, much information has been dispensed by American Russian Cultural Association in response to inquiries received from schools, colleges and magazines of nation-wide circulation.

ARCA has been consulted extensively by representatives of leading motion picture companies in connection with films about Russia currently in production. Mr. V. Antonoff, in an interview with Mrs. Fosdick shortly after his arrival in the United States last summer, gave a comprehensive picture and understanding of the film industry of the present day in the U.S.S.R.

The Russian language courses initiated by Dr. E. Markoff, member of the Board of ARCA, in the spring of 1943, are being continued under the Association's auspices. Classes and private instruction are in progress under Mrs. O. Lang and Mrs. O. Domanovsky. Dr. Markoff, who is also a professor of the Ecole Libre des Hautes Etudes in New York, held the summer session in the Russian language at Columbia University.

The Board of Directors wishes to express its deep appreciation to the Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, in Moscow, U.S.S.R., for the splendid material received from them covering all phases of culture in the Soviet Union.

The Directors are grateful to the members of the Honorary Board who contributed whole-heartedly in time, thought and otherwise to the success of this first year of activity of the American Russian Cultural Association, thanking especially Mrs. Samuel L. M. Barlow for her hospitality on March 28th, Dr. Watson for his lecture, Rockwell Kent for his article "Art and War", Mr. Robert Redfield for his invaluable aid in handling legal details and Professor Roerich for his helpful suggestions and special articles. During the course of the year, Professor Roerich, residing in India, where he works untiringly in promulgating Russian art and culture through exhibitions, writings and public addresses, has sent several articles to ARCA here in America. His article "Podvig" was chosen by Mrs. Pregel for publication in Novosselye at the time of the launching of the ARCA program in the summer of 1942, and an English translation of it is attached to this report.

The Board wishes to thank also ARCA's Corresponding Secretaries, Mary Coryn and Bronia Drutt, for their splendid work and untiring cooperation.

The Directors of the American Russian Cultural Association, deeply gratified in the substantial advancement of Russian-American cultural relations and understanding already achieved, look forward confidently to 1944 and a constantly expanding sphere of activity and service for ARCA.

"PODVIG"

The Oxford dictionary has legitimated some Russian words, which now find international usage. For instance the words "ukase" and "soviet" are defined in the dictionary. One more word should be included — the untranslatable, significant Russian word "podvig".

Strangely enough, not one European language has a word approximating its meaning. It is said that the Tibetan language has some similar expressions, and perhaps among the sixty thousands of Chinese characters there may be something similar, but the European languages have no equivalent for this immemorial, characteristic Russian expression. Heroism heralded by trumpet blasts still does not fully interpret the ever-living, all-perfected idea carried by the Russian "podvig". "Heroic deed" — is not quite it; "valour" — will not cover it; "self-denial" — again is not the same; "improvement" — falls short; "achievement" — is entirely different, because it implies some conclusion, while "podvig" is unlimited. Collect from different languages many words which carry the best ideas of advancement, and not one of these words will be equivalent to the succinct but adequate Russian term "podvig". And how beautiful is this word: it is more than advancement — it is "podvig"!

Endless and tireless work for the general good results in great progress, and it is this that has given Russia her glorious heroes. Great deeds are accomplished without great noise, by simply going on and on, considering only the benefit of humanity.

Among the many noble concepts being fast forgotten is the especially neglected principle of humaneness. Ugly or not, the fact is that humans are forgetting about humaneness. Destruction, insults, belittling are taking its place. But, precisely, "podvig" does not destroy, does not insult, does not condemn.

"Podvig" creates and collects good, perfects life, develops humaneness. Is it not wonderful that the Russian people have created this luminous, elevating concept? The man of "podvig" accepts a great burden, and he takes it up voluntarily. In this voluntariness there is not a trace of selfishness, there is only the love for one's fellowman, for whose sake the hero struggles along all thorny paths. He is a staunch worker; he knows the value of work; he feels the beauty of action; and in the tension of labor he welcomes every co-worker. Kindliness, friendliness, help to the hard-pressed, — all this characterizes a hero.

"Podvig" is not manifested only among the leaders of nations. There are many heroes everywhere. They all work, they are eternally studying, and they advance the true culture.

"Podvig" means movement, alertness, patience, and knowledge, knowledge!

If the foreign dictionaries have accepted the words "ukase" and "soviet", they should by all means include the best Russian word — "podvig".

*"Glowing with rapture
The boy brought benevolent message —
That all shall ascend the high mountain.
Exodus of the people he was commanded to tell.*

*A sacred message, but my dear
Little envoy, quickly
Change one word.
When thou farther hast gone
Thou wilt call thy luminous
Message, not an "exodus",
But thou wilt say
"Podvig"!*

NICHOLAS ROERICH.

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